FIT FOR THE KING

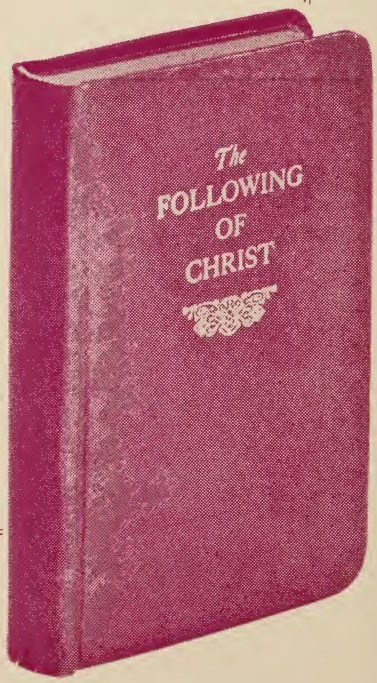
By SISTER EMILY JOSEPH, C.S.J.

AMERICA PRESS
70 East 45th Street, New York 17, N. Y.

Not *Have you read it*
but *Do you read*

THE FOLLOWING OF CHRIST

The spiritual reflections long attributed to Thomas à Kempis, now translated from the original manuscript of Gerard Groote. Known and beloved through five centuries, these gems of spiritual wisdom anticipate every mind; understand every heart.



Pocket size
3 x 5 inches
readable type

$1.75

AMERICA PRESS
70 E. 45th St., N. Y. C. 17

FIT FOR THE KING

BY

SISTER EMILY JOSEPH, C.S.J.

AMERICA PRESS

70 EAST 45th STREET NEW YORK 17, N. Y.

Nihil Obstat:

Rev. Ferdinand Mayer, O.F.M.Conv.
Censor Librorum

Imprimatur:

✠ Edmund F. Gibbons
Bishop of Albany

Quotations from Monsignor Ronald A. Knox' translation of the New Testament and the Psalms are by permission of the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster and by the courtesy of Messrs. A. P. Watt, London, and Messrs. Sheed and Ward.

1

The Questing Heart

For me, life means Christ (Phil. 1: 21)

DEEP within each and every one of us lies the instinct for "hero worship." The small boy manifests it in his eagerness to double for the superman who has captivated his fancy, whether he appears in the comic strip, the movies or on the stage of life. It is this same instinct which prompts young girls to dream of gallant knights of long ago or of handsome heroes of today, and to imitate with amusing seriousness the manners, dress, accent and hair-do of the feminine stars who, as celluloid figures in a fantastic story-land, capture hearts or throw them away at will.

This instinct for "hero worship" is God-given; therefore it is good. It is true that, if left to develop without guidance, it may lead to unhappy, even tragic, results. Yet this same instinct is responsible for the mutual admiration which, as prelude to the love of man and woman, culminates in the sanctified love of married life.

We were made to love. We must find our hero. "To love and be loved" is the intense, though unuttered, longing of every young girl. Strength, success, reputation, understanding, identity of interests and ideals, magnanimity—such are the qualities which attract a girl's heart and to which she is willing to respond with complete submission of love. But how seldom does the earthly hero offer a

combination of all these qualities! More than once has the charge been made that girls have entered the religious life because they were "disappointed in love." In the commonly accepted meaning, the phrase conveys the sad story of one who, having yielded her heart in love, has suffered the humiliation of receiving it back, unappreciated and abused. It is unlikely that one in such a plight would seek solace in convent life; it is even more unlikely that she would find it, since it was self-pity that motivated her action. It is not from such a source that the happiness of a religious life springs.

The Divine Discontent

The phrase, "disappointed in love," may, however, have another interpretation. It is difficult to find that combination of human qualities which will satisfy the almost infinite craving of the human heart for love. One who seeks for the perfect hero among the creatures of this world must be doomed to disappointment. Inevitably the feet of clay will appear. Such was the experience of Saint Augustine, who gave immortal utterance to his long search for a perfect object of love: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee."

In Christ alone, most beautiful of the sons of men, can love find the perfect answer. The heart of a young girl, searching for a strong lover, turns to Christ, who has vanquished death and all the powers of hell to save her. As for success—His was the unique triumph over the grave. His is a Name at which every knee in heaven, on earth and in the depths of hell must bend. In the Sacred Heart are

infinite understanding, infinite compassion and a tenderness beyond power of words to express. This is the Christ who came from the courts of heaven as a baby to win man's love, and who grew into the stature of the perfect Man—all for love. What is the answer? Such perfection and generosity call for complete devotion and self-surrender in return. Here is the first and all-important motive which should induce one to embrace religious life.

Again, from the Cross comes the piercing cry of the abandoned Christ, "I thirst," and that agonized plea for love echoes down the centuries, arousing in hearts tormented by a similar thirst a response of love to love. The seed of an intense, personal love for Christ, taking root in a grace-filled heart and nurtured by the light and warmth of the Spirit of Love, grows like the tiny mustard seed, until it becomes a mighty tree which will harbor in its branches all the souls He died to save.

Herein lies the significance of the Mystical Body of Christ. It is not necessary to read the learned and lengthy volumes which have been written by eminent theologians in order to understand this important doctrine. Saint Paul explains it in most simple terms: Christ's Church is His Body—His Mystical Body; Jesus Christ is the Head, we are the members. Just as, in the physical body, the head controls and lends dignity to the rest of the body, and just as all members of the body must properly coordinate their functions and direct their actions to the well-being and service of other members of the body; so, too, in the Mystical Body, members take their direction and importance from Christ, the Head, and must serve reciprocally for the advancement of the entire Body.

What relationship has this doctrine to a religious vocation? Precisely this: one who is animated with intense, personal love of Christ must love the *whole* Christ. She must recognize her importance as a member of Christ's Mystical Body and her obligation to contribute to the welfare of all other members. From this realization should spring the desire to serve them, and it is with this thought in mind that a young girl undertakes the selection of that particular type of religious life in which she can best render service.

Three Ways

When the question, "What order[1] of Sisters shall I enter?" arises, three possibilities present themselves. There are, for one, the strictly cloistered orders.

From the earliest centuries of Christianity, women have severed all ties with the world in order to devote themselves exclusively to prayer. In a life in which the days are marked by recitation of the Divine Office, meditation and earnest prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, chosen souls offer to the offended Majesty of God adoration and reparation for guilty men. Manual labor, such as gardening and domestic duties, provides the relaxation demanded by the physical side of human nature; while charity, supplemented by the income received from the needlecraft or other products of the Sisters' artistic fingers, helps to sustain life.

Within the cloister walls prevails a spiritual activity which obtains from the Heart of Christ treasures of grace to support His missionaries in their

[1]The word "order" is used here, not in its strict canonical sense, but to denote any of the various Societies, Congregations, Institutes, etc., to which the various communities of religious women belong.

hours of discouragement, and which overwhelm the hearts of obdurate sinners with repentance in their final moments. Forgetfulness of self, complete absorption in Christ and concern for the spiritual interests of His Mystical Body—these forge the key to the happiness which reigns in the heart of a contemplative nun.

Obviously, in such a life the emphasis is on prayer; its demands upon human nature are, therefore, tremendous. Justification and precedent for a life of such rigor are found in the life of Christ, who often retired to a desert place or a hillside to spend the night praying to His Father. Only on Judgment Day will it be revealed what miracles of grace for all the world have been won through the prayers and sacrifices of these consecrated lives.

The Far-away Fields

The field of missionary activity offers other religious the opportunity of spreading the knowledge of Christ and of serving the ignorant or suffering members of His Mystical Body. For these, the world is their convent, and the horizons their cloister walls. Like Mary, who hastened on an errand of mercy over the hill country of Judea, carrying within her the unborn Saviour, the missionary Sisters carry Christ over land and seas to souls who do not know Him. Hearts filled with the tenderness and sympathy of a God-given, maternal instinct pour love and comfort upon the sick, the outcast, the destitute; neither color, creed nor condition forms a barrier to their solicitude. Read the accounts of the missionary labors of Mother Marianne of Molokai, of Mother Cabrini, of the Marist, Maryknoll, or countless other mis-

sionary Sisters in all parts of the globe. Courage, self-sacrifice, heroism, love-in-action—for these there awaits a reward far greater than the Purple Heart. It is the love of the Sacred Heart of Christ, who has assured us that whatever we do to the least of His brethren, we do as a personal service to Him.

The dominant note in the life of a missionary Sister is an activity which is the manifestation of zeal. Lest this latter fail, it must be nourished by constant contact with the fire of love which emanates from the great Heart of Christ. Hence, the life of a missionary must also be one of prayer; not the quiet, adoring, unitive prayer of the contemplative, but prayer which consults always the will of the Master and which offers the total gift of self without thought of reward.

In Our Lady's Steps

The outstanding characteristics of these two forms of religious life, the contemplative and missionary, are found in combination in those numerous orders of women who devote themselves to the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. It is our Blessed Mother, the ideal of every religious, whom the Church holds forth as the perfect example of this life. On the Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady into heaven, the gospel recounts the story of Our Lord's visit to the home of Martha and Mary. Martha is the type of the active religious who lovingly and solicitously cares for the physical needs of Christ's Mystical Body, modeling her life on Our Lady, who cared so perfectly for the needs of Christ, her Son, during His earthly life. Mary, who sat at Our Lord's feet, is the type of the contemplative religious whose supreme

happiness consists in heart-to-heart communion with her Beloved. Here, again, it was Our Lady who gave the perfect example of a life of union of heart and soul with Christ during the long years of His hidden life at Nazareth. In her, then, are united perfectly the two aspects of religious life: prayer and works of mercy. The active life of the missionary finds its complement in the prayer of the contemplative, and the latter finds in the active life outlet for the zeal begotten during hours of meditation and prayer.

Following this exalted model, countless numbers of women have striven to prove their love for Christ in religious orders devoted to the instruction of children, the education of youth, the protection of orphans, the help of the deaf, the dumb and the blind, and the care of the sick and aged. Individual orders tend to concentrate, more or less, upon one or other of these charitable works; and the lives of the Sisters are so ordered that periods of prayer alternate with their activities of mercy. In fact, the activities of the day provide opportunity for a member of such a community to do the work inspired by the Holy Spirit during meditation at the beginning of her day, which she reports to the Supreme Commander when she repairs to the chapel at night. The never-failing understanding and appreciation of the Heart of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is ample reward for having borne "the labors of the day and its heats."

Another powerful motive which impels one to enter religious life is the desire to make reparation to the Sacred Heart for the sins of the world. Again, the doctrine of the Mystical Body adds meaning to the concept of reparation. The simile of the physical body helps to clarify the idea. If one member suffers an injury, other members must do double service to com-

pensate. If one eye is injured, the other performs the functions of both eyes. If one hand is injured, the other—or other parts of the body, the arm or foot—lends assistance to make up for the incapacity. So it is with the Mystical Body. Members fall victim to the foul disease of sin. Other members must exert themselves to do more than is naturally demanded of them in order that the *whole* Christ may function properly. Sin is an outrageous insult to Christ, the Head of the Mystical Body. Souls who are inflamed with love for their Head, realizing the indignity offered to Christ by sinners, are eager to make compensation. The infinite character of the insult demands their utmost by way of reparation. Hence, the sacrifices imposed by religious life seem little enough for these zealous souls to offer to the offended Majesty of God. Atonement must be made for the sins of a greedy, lustful, hate-filled world which rejects God and His Commandments. Mortification, prayer, penance, sacrifice, consecration are the answer with which the religious strives to make reparation. By silence she atones for man's blasphemies; her chastity is an antidote for the world's impurities; devotion is offered to offset indifference, poverty and detachment to compensate for greed, obedience to expiate man's pride, license and insubordination to God's Will. Such love-in-action on the part of consecrated souls goes far to comfort and console Christ's Heart, broken by sin, and to stay the avenging hand of our outraged God.

2

God's Good Servant

What God asks of you is that you should sanctify yourselves (I Thess. 4: 3)

SAINT PAUL tells us we are called to be saints. This is the will of God for us. That means we have a responsibility. Sanctity, of course, is both given and acquired. The Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier, supplies the necessary grace; it is for us, individually, to accept this grace, utilize it and thereby attain the goal which is set before us in accordance with the plan of our lives which is eternally present in the mind of God. For each soul He has created, the Divine Architect has designed a special "blueprint." Although there is almost unlimited variety in the details on these "blueprints," they may be divided into three classes which are the three states of life in which one may dedicate herself to Christ—namely, the religious life, the married state, the unmarried life of the lay apostle.

According to the divine plan most women are called to married life. Theirs is to be the sublime privilege of cooperating with God in the continued work of creation. They are the great temple builders, fashioning from their own bodies temples of the Holy Spirit. Love-in-action is the theme song of their lives, and if their generosity is to be the measure of their eternal reward, who can conceive of the infinite happiness God has in store for faithful, self-sacrificing mothers who give their lives, their strength, their love—their whole self—in devotion to their family for the love of God?

For some souls, however, the "blueprint" indicates a vocation to the religious life. This will be made clear to the individual by the light of the Holy Spirit and, if a chosen girl is to conform her life to the pattern designed for her, she must follow her vocation. It is in this life that she will find happiness, and in it she will be showered with the abundant graces which will lead her to sanctity.

Many of the saints have found that consideration of the instability and the transitory character of the pleasures of this life helps to dispel their attractiveness and leads to a truer evaluation of them. "*Quid ad aeternitatem?*" ("What does this amount to in the light of eternity?") is a question which, if applied to the various features of our daily lives, prompts the answer that nothing is of lasting value or happiness apart from God.

The Witchery of the World

If one would be a follower of Christ in more than name, he must enlist under the standard of the King in warfare against a threefold enemy: the world, the flesh and the devil. In countless, subtle ways the first of these enemies endeavors to capture the love of our hearts and wean us away from Christ. Chief among the techniques which the world employs is the creation of a false sense of values. Tinsel appears to be gold, pleasures of the senses masquerade as happiness; and air-filled bubbles, made beautiful by the stolen splendor of the sun, lure us on in the pursuit of meaningless vanities. Here one should heed the advice of the Apostle: "Scrutinize all carefully, retaining only what is good, and rejecting all that has a look of evil about it" (I Thess. 5:22). Be not deceived by

the seductive temptations of the world. Happiness is the reward of the one who follows most perfectly the exhortation of Christ: "Renounce yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23). Education, friends, health, opportunity for travel, an abundance of this world's goods, and leisure in which to enjoy them—such are the temporal blessings which conduce to happiness, but how seldom and for how short a time can anyone possess them all! It is well that this is so. Unalloyed pleasure in this world would tend to make us unmindful of our true destiny. "We have an everlasting city, but not here" (Heb. 13:14). The danger lies in accepting the goods of the world unreservedly. Hence the Church, in one of her official prayers, begs "that we may so pass through the good things of time that we may not lose those which are eternal."

For the chosen souls whom the King calls to the religious life there is provided a mighty bulwark against the snares and deceits of the world. Their contact with worldly temptations is reduced to a minimum, and their feet are directed from the path of ambition and self-indulgence along the way of humility and self-denial. Charity, which Saint Paul proclaims the greatest of all virtues, becomes the motivating principle of their lives, and all created things are given consideration only in proportion as they lead the soul nearer to God. Certainly the religious state affords exceptional opportunities for sanctification, if one is faithful to the grace of God which is supplied in such abundance.

It is not so simple a matter to conquer the attacks of the flesh. The author of the *Imitation of Christ* warns us that we can never escape the cross, since we must always carry our bodies about with us. This is

the trial which not even the greatest saints have escaped. In fact, it has often been the trial which was the stepping-stone to their sanctity. Human nature, since the fall of our first parents, has been a defective nature, prone to evil and constantly warring against itself. The fact of our weakness and our evil propensities must be faced. The conflict is inescapable, but the outcome of the conflict rests with the individual. God will supply abundant grace to parry each assault of the flesh, but it rests with the individual to develop his or her own skill in wielding this weapon of grace. Religious life provides the ideal training school for acquiring this skill. Lessons in self-control, patience, humility and detachment condition the soul to such an extent that the rebellious flesh is subdued and kept in check, and the spirit is left free to soar to God.

God's Enemy and Ours

Our third enemy offers something of a paradox. He is unspeakably dreadful, yet easily vanquished. Saint Peter describes the devil as an enemy who "goes about roaring like a lion, to find his prey" (I Peter 5:8). This is certainly a formidable prospect, and alarm increases when one realizes that Satan still possesses the angelic intelligence and spiritual powers which belong to his created nature. This terrifying enemy, moreover, launches his most vicious attacks on those who serve in the foremost ranks of the King whom he hates. Naturally, then, religious may expect frequent, bitter assaults from this enemy; yet they have little to fear. Their way of life supplies them with weapons which Satan cannot withstand. The religious who fearlessly denounces these insidious

suggestions, who humbly and confidently casts herself into the protecting arms of Christ and invokes Our Lady, Satan's most dreaded foe, will always emerge as victor in the conflict, no matter how repeated or how violent are the attacks.

Such, then, are the motives which should prompt one to enter the convent: intense personal love for Christ, to whom the religious consecrates her body and soul forever; an ardent love for all members of Christ's Mystical Body, whom she desires to serve; a burning desire to make reparation to Christ by a life of sacrifice for the offenses of a sinful world; an eagerness for personal sanctification and a recognition of the advantages which the religious life offers in our conflict with the world, the flesh and the devil.

No other motives than these are worthy, although others are conceivable. Unhappy conditions at home, for instance, might prompt one to seek comfort in the convent. Personal attraction for an individual nun might arouse the desire to become a religious. A distaste for domestic duties and responsibilities might create the impression (how erroneous!) that convent life would provide an escape. It has even been known that the illogical concept, "all men are evil and to be shunned"—arising from an unfortunate incident which involved one poor male whose human weaknesses were more apparent than his virtues—impelled one to embrace a religious vocation. Such motives as these are essentially selfish and, hence, improper. With sound spiritual direction, some of them could be used as factors which would lead to worthy motives, but it must ever be remembered that religious life is *not* an escape. It is a positive consecration of one's entire self to the service of Christ the King.

3

Life with the King

We are Christ's ambassadors (II Cor. 5: 20)

LOVE, romance, adventure—where is the young heart that is not ready to set out upon the road which holds promise of these three? The blood of youth tingles with excitement at the prospect of matching its strength against unknown foes, of enjoying new experiences and enduring painful trials, provided that at the end of the road waits one whose love makes all the struggle worthwhile.

How few there are, even among good Catholics, who believe that convent life offers in the full sense of the word the answer to a young girl's craving for love, romance and adventure. There is lamentable ignorance and misunderstanding on the part of the laity with regard to the nature of religious life. Undoubtedly the devil has learned from experience that he can swerve numerous souls from a life of devoted service to Christ the King, if he spreads a false conception of this life. Consequently he draws a caricature of a religious, picturing her as unnaturally averse to all happiness, pursuing a life of silence, rigorous self-denial and poverty, unrelieved by any appreciation of this world's joys. He circulates fantastic stories as to the motives which induce the young and innocent to enter this life and adds even more fantastic accounts of the semi-moronic training and treatment they will receive within convent walls. It is difficult to decide which is more ludicrous, the distorted picture of religious life which Satan creates

from his fertile imagination, or the credulity of Catholics who fail to recognize the picture for what it is.

Truth has always been and always will be the most potent force against the devil's wiles. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that a true description of religious life be presented. First of all, it is life with the King. And who is this King? Centuries ago, the Psalmist asked and answered this question: "Who is this King of glory? The Lord mighty and powerful, the Lord powerful in battle—the Lord of virtues, He is the King of glory!" He is the "King of Kings and Lord of Lords," omnipotent Son of God, Love Incarnate. "He shall rule from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. And all kings of the earth shall adore Him: all nations shall serve Him."

Life with the King means intimate love, wholehearted devotion to this ideal King. It means adventure, encountered in the interests of souls who belong to the King but whom an enemy is seeking to destroy. It means romance, experienced in the constant manifestations of the beneficence of the King of heaven toward His simple handmaid. The Prince who made poor little Cinderella the mistress of his heart appears drab and uninteresting when compared with the King of glory whose magnificence fills heaven and earth.

Yet, in the case of our King, the glory and magnificence of His Divinity are wonderfully and inseparably united with the most lovable of human characteristics in the Person of Jesus Christ. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son" (John 3: 16), and this Son was a Man who walked, talked, ate, slept, experienced joy and sorrow

just like any other man. He was, as Saint Paul tells us, like us in all respects except that He was absolutely sinless.

The speech of love is sacrifice, and sacrifice means consecration. One who embraces a religious vocation consecrates her life to God. A true picture of such a life is presented by Father Leonard Feeney, S.J., in his biography of Mother Seton, *An American Woman*. Since it is a man's estimate, and no nun could offer such details without being charged with prejudice in her own regard, the passage is here quoted in its entirety.

What Is a Nun?

"A nun is a little lady *all* consecrated to God. She arises at five in the morning and goes to bed at about nine at night. Before she has breakfast she has at least two hours of prayer, including Holy Mass. Every moment of the day in which she is not occupied with some necessary task she is bettering her soul by way of spiritual reading, examination of conscience, and the like. She has no worldly ambitions, desires no fame, seeks no romance, asks no reward offered on this earth. She is poor, chaste, obedient, anxious to be always the maximum of service to her sisters and to her neighbors, and the minimum of annoyance. She has the loveliest manners existent in this world, is modest, soft-voiced, invariably gay. Laughter comes to her as easily as sunlight. She is most tender in her affections, but chastity gives her a strength that is almost masculine. Perhaps I should better call her 'boyish.' Indeed, I feel that is her right epithet. She talks easily and freely because the practice of contemplation has taught her what is valuable to speak.

She holds more fondness for her parents in a single thought than all their married daughters do in a thousand. She retains her girlishness longest, and at forty, fifty, even sixty, it is hard to guess her age. Yet she is never coy or 'feminine.' She is as much at home discussing a new furnace for the cellar with the janitor as she is discussing the virtues of Saint Catherine of Genoa with her sisters at recreation. She wears a dress that clearly distinguishes her from the world, yet has her little precisions as to how it should be arranged in an attractive manner. She is most responsive to affection, but will not allow herself to be spoiled. Compliments please her, but she banishes them with a gesture, and prefers to shine in one's eyes in simple innocence and sober black. She feels safest and most at home in her chapel, and will spend hours on end, unmindful of any distress in her back or knees, before the Blessed Sacrament. She calls Our Lady 'her Mother' and Our Lord 'her Spouse,' and she has little secrecies with them that no one dare inquire about or conjecture. She is beautiful in sickness, and capable of bearing pain more silently than any creature of this earth. She is modest and undramatic in her death, asks only to be laid in the graveyard of her community as 'one of the Sisters' and with a tombstone undistinguishable, save for the name, from any other. In death she rejoices most in those hours of her life that were lived through pure faith, in which she took Christ's revelation literally, and did not question or doubt. It usually costs no more than ten or twelve dollars to bury her. And there are no flowers. . . ." Such is the picture of a nun —commonplace in the eyes of the world, but beautiful and significant in the eyes of Christ, her Spouse.

It may sometimes happen that a vocation remains

undeveloped because certain details of the religious life seem shrouded in mystery. A young girl may feel, "I don't know whether I would want to be a nun or not, because I don't know anything about convent life." Of course, the aspirant has a perfect right to acquaint herself with information about this manner of life. The Code of Canon Law has set forth directions which regulate the mode of life for religious. Slight variations exist in different religious communities, but the following outline will serve to indicate the most important details.

The Training of a Sister

There is an old proverb, "The habit does not make the monk." One does not become a religious, therefore, simply by entering within the walls of a convent. For at least six months—this may be extended to a year—there is a period of probation. During this time the Postulant retains her baptismal name, and dresses in a uniform which differs from the wardrobe she left at home but is not the habit of the order. Gradually and gently she is introduced to the practices of the religious life. The rules of silence, obedience, self-control and religious decorum are explained. Prayer, domestic duties, study and recreation constitute the order of the day. Throughout this period the Postulant strives to determine whether this sample, as it were, of the religious life gives promise of fulfilling her dream and whether she can conform to the strenuous and virtuous program which is set before her. The community, too, studies the Postulant. If she manifests the characteristics which are the foundation stone of the spiritual life and if she expresses the desire to enter the Novitiate, her period

of Postulancy is terminated by the reception of the Holy Habit. Now she receives her religious name and crosses the threshold of the new life wherein she is to die to the world and live only for Christ.

The Novitiate is normally a period of two years. Under the solicitous direction of one who has learned and reduced to practice in daily life the secrets of the saints, the young religious applies herself to the study and practice of virtue. All activity is directed toward one goal—the reproduction in her soul of the living image of Christ. The candidate spends hour after hour in thoughtful study of the responsibilities associated with the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. She receives instructions in the particular work to which the community is dedicated. The rewards attached to this work, as well as the difficulties involved, are made clear. What rewards? Everything which Christ Himself had in mind when He promised to those who leave home and family for His sake the hundredfold in this world, and life everlasting in the next. What difficulties? Those which develop from the struggle human nature must make to use the abundant means of grace provided especially for this state of life. In short, every effort is made that the Novice shall become perfectly aware of the seriousness and the beauty of the life to which she wishes to bind herself under vows. Finally, after indicating her free desire in the matter and after obtaining the approbation of the community, she solemnly makes her profession of the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. This first profession is, however, a temporary one and the obligation assumed terminates at the expiration of the vows. In most communities this period of temporary profession is followed by the act of final consecration under vows

from which only the Holy See can offer dispensation.

In cloistered communities the character of the vows is more solemn, but the significance of the act of profession is everywhere the same. It is the gesture of love, which desires to give its *all* to satisfy the love-thirsting Heart of Christ. Worldly goods, independence, talents and physical powers, above all the right to look forward to the joys of a home in which she would reign as the cherished ideal of husband and children—these are love's holocaust, offered in the profession of vows. The world, with clouded, uncomprehending eyes, looks on and echoes the words of Judas as he watched Magdalen pour her precious ointment lavishly upon the feet of Christ: "What is the meaning of this waste?" But the jubilant court of heaven, the adoring Cherubim, the flaming Seraphim, the majestic Archangels and all the saints send hymn after hymn of praise and joy through the realms of heaven as they behold this demonstration of love-in-action. Is it a waste to place the most beautiful of flowers upon our altars? Is it a waste to provide a bishop with vestments of richest silk and gold? Is it a waste to employ the utmost of magnificence and splendor for the coronation of a Pope? Of course not. Then how could it be a waste to consecrate the most precious of all gifts—life itself—to Christ the King, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life?

4

A Spirit Fit for the King

Yours is to be the same mind which Christ Jesus shewed (Phil. 2:5)

MOST of us have seen, sometime or other, a diamond of unusual beauty and brilliance. We have been impressed by the sparkling light, the multicolored flashes; were fascinated by its indescribable loveliness. The scientist will explain to you that the beauty of the diamond is the result of its numerous facets, the purity of the carbon and the angles at which the surface is cut. But one cannot analyze the parts of the stone, study each facet separately, and then arrive at a perfect understanding of the beauty of the entire diamond. Although each facet of the jewel may be resplendent in itself, the beauty of the whole is much more than the sum of the beauty of the parts.

So it is with a human life. There are certain virtues required of all who would follow Christ in every state of life—not only such virtues as faith, hope and charity—which are infused into the soul at baptism—but the virtues of humility, meekness and patience, which must be acquired by effort and struggle and which, when acquired, add an indefinable charm to human personality. It is the Christ within, manifesting Himself through His creature.

Christ Himself established the first religious community. Early in His public life, He selected from

the crowds that came to hear Him teach twelve men whom He bound together in special relationship to Himself and to each other. The Church, in her wisdom, has studied the manner of life these men lived and the special instructions which Christ gave them, and on this pattern has modeled all religious communities.

Of the very essence of religious life are the three vows and their corresponding virtues. Only a cursory treatment of them can be given here, since intensive study of the nature and obligations imposed by the vows is required in every novitiate.

Poverty

By the simple vow of poverty the religious renounces the right to use anything as her own. She may receive permission to use money and other things, but any act of proprietorship is forbidden her. For instance, a Sister does not *own* her habit, her books, study-lamp, fountain pen, etc. She may have permission to use such articles, even for life (if the pen has a lifetime guarantee!) but, theoretically at least, she may be deprived of them at any time, if the superior has need of them for someone else. In a community, all things are possessed in common.

It is not difficult to keep the vow of poverty. On the contrary, it is this vow which makes for much of the happiness of religious life, since the renunciation of worldly goods clears away many of the encumbrances which act as shackles upon the soul, preventing its flight to God. When Francis of Assisi was clad in the fine clothes his wealth provided, his heart was heavy. When he set out upon the road in his garment of burlap, with a rope for a cincture, he sang as gaily as a bird.

Strictly speaking, a religious has only to observe the prescriptions of the rule in order to keep the vow of poverty, but no religious worthy of the name is satisfied with this. There is the virtue of poverty to be acquired. The vow strips the hand; the virtue strips the heart. Frequent meditation upon the life of Christ and the high value He placed upon poverty inclines the heart to relinquish all attachment to creature comforts in order to become more closely attached to Christ. Once the heart becomes so inclined, it seeks opportunities to prove its willingness to practise self-denial and sacrifice. Each renunciation expands the soul, helps to rid it of self-love and renders it a more attractive dwelling for the King. And Christ finds joy in coming each morning in sacramental form to a heart that has emptied itself of all solicitude for earthly goods to make room for Him—a heart in which reigns the spirit of poverty. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs."

Chastity

By binding herself under a vow of chastity, a religious avails herself of a most potent weapon against concupiscence of the flesh. Placing herself, as it were, under contract with God, she boldly challenges one of the most unruly foes of temporal and eternal happiness. Chastity is often spoken of as the "angelic virtue" because it makes men and women like angels. Our Lord Himself said: "When the dead rise again, there is no marrying and giving in marriage; they are as the angels in heaven are" (Matt. 22:30). Of course, since angels have no bodies, they are not troubled by desires which have their root in the flesh. Therefore the angels do not have to exert any effort to remain pure. Men and women, how-

ever, must exert heroic effort to gain this ideal. Consequently, the practice of this virtue raises a man, in a certain sense, even higher than the angels, and we read in the Apocalypse that virgin souls will be marked by special rewards and will enjoy a special degree of intimacy with Christ in heaven for all eternity.

It would be difficult to say which of the three vows is most important. Some idea of the value of the vow of obedience may be gathered from the fact that in at least one prominent religious community the members take only this one vow. Fidelity to poverty and chastity are included under the vow of obedience. By the vow of poverty one renounces all right to the free use of the material things of the world. By the vow of chastity one surrenders to God the body, renouncing the right to enjoy the happiness of marriage, the joy of motherhood and the comforts of home and family. By the vow of obedience one offers as a holocaust to God the most precious gift bestowed by the Creator on man—free will. The religious bound by this vow no longer has the right to determine where she will go, or when, or how, or with whom. All such decisions are left to the will of the superior, through whom God makes his will known to the religious.

It is this aspect of religious life—the surrender of one's will to the will of another—which draws a sharp line of demarcation between those who are espoused to Christ and those who are of the world. The very word "religious" tells the whole story: *religare* means "to bind." The religious is "*religata Deo*"—"bound to God." No wonder that she feels justified in proclaiming with Saint Paul, "With Christ I hang upon the cross!"

This precious vow of obedience builds up a mighty bulwark of defense against the assaults of the world, the flesh and the devil. It is pride which sets its stamp upon the man of the world—pride, first of the seven capital sins, the root of all sins, the devil's special attribute. It was Lucifer's cry of "I will not serve" that precipitated him from the heights of heaven into the depths of hell. It was the disobedience of Adam and Eve, springing from pride, which cast them from their earthly paradise. It is the spirit of independence, insubordination, pride, which prompts the votaries of sin and pleasure to fling aside the Commandments of God and worship at the altar of self-will. This same pride will not hesitate to assault the soul within convent walls; but its force will be undermined, its virulence rendered impotent against one who arms herself with a weapon over which the massed forces of Satan have no control. It is a weapon placed in the hands of the religious by her vow of obedience, namely, the virtue of humility.

When the religious binds herself to Christ, she takes Him as her model in all things. Of this divine model Saint Paul says: "He lowered His own dignity, accepted an obedience which brought Him to death, death on a cross" (Phil. 2:8). Within this little sentence lies the secret of sanctity. All spiritual writers agree that the edifice of our spiritual life can stand firm only upon the cornerstone of humility. Very little need be said of this beautiful virtue, since every religious congregation impresses its sublime nature and its fundamental importance upon all members from the first moment of their entrance. Saint Joseph the lowly carpenter of Nazareth, Mary the humble

handmaid of the Lord, the Christ Child lying in the manger of Bethlehem, fleeing in apparent impotence from the jealousy of a wicked tyrant, living in obscurity in a country town of slight repute, and, finally, Christ, the God-Man, dying a criminal's death in ignominious disgrace upon the cross—such are the models ever before the eyes of one who would follow in the footsteps of the King of Kings. It seems self-evident that an obedient religious must be humble, holy and happy.

Obedience mothers and nurtures all the other virtues which serve to render the spouse of Christ dear to His Heart and make her a source of edification to the world. Consider, for example, how obedience tends to develop the spirit of faith. There are certain virtues—e.g., joy, charity, humility—which will still remain with us when we join the heavenly hosts to sing the praises of God for all eternity. Faith does not belong in this category, for faith is a virtue to be practised only in this life. It is a virtue which was praised by Christ Himself when, appearing to Thomas after His resurrection, He said, "Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have learned to believe."

The theological virtue of faith is infused into the soul at baptism. Without a spirit of faith, no one would take the first step toward consecrating his or her life to God. Once the threshold of the religious life has been crossed, this spirit of faith must be nourished constantly so that life becomes literally one prolonged act of faith. It requires faith to see God's will in even the most unattractive orders imposed by superiors; to discern God's providence in the sorrows and disappointments of life; to recognize God's wisdom in contradictions, frustrations, and failures. It

is faith in the words of infallible Truth which strengthens religious to surmount the difficulties of the journey, knowing that at the end lies heaven. "I am going away to prepare a home for you," Our Lord announced at the Last Supper (John 14:2). By faith in His words, His consecrated spouse will attain to the reward He has promised.

Breaking Ground

It must now be sufficiently clear that the distinctive feature of the religious life, as well as its greatest safeguard and its surest guarantee of reward, consists of the three vows. What effect should this conclusion have upon one who is contemplating the consecration of her life to Christ? Precisely this: just as a farmer plows his field in the fall so that it may be ready to receive the seed in the spring, so should the future bride of Christ prepare the field of her heart to receive the seed—the novitiate instructions for her profession of vows—by becoming very adept in the practice of obedience. Countless occasions will arise when she can graciously accede to the wishes of another without displaying that her own will in the matter is far different. (Of course, it is to be clearly understood that this suggestion applies *only* to matters involving no question of right or wrong. In these matters one must stand on the side of right, even if one stands alone against the world.) This procedure—going against self at least once a day—will develop such a degree of self-discipline that many of the difficulties which beset the path of the less disciplined novice will be eliminated.

It must occur to one who considers for the first time the nature of the religious vows that they de-

mand much of human nature—a spirit of great generosity. That is very true. Generosity is synonymous with nobility of soul, and what true nobility can be claimed by the soul consecrated as the spouse of the King of Kings! *Noblesse oblige!* True to her exalted position, the religious responds to the demands made upon her time and strength with a magnificence and generosity which, in a finite degree, approximate the generosity of her Creator and Redeemer. It is this spirit which clothes her with a graciousness and charm far exceeding that of her sisters in the world. The ability to forget herself while laboring for the comfort of others creates about her an indescribable air of Christlikeness. Affability, cheerfulness, sympathetic interest in the cares of others, an eagerness to be of service—such are the fruits begotten of a spirit of generosity. They are qualities which act as a magnet in drawing hearts to the love of God. Blessed, indeed, is the religious who so reflects the goodness of God that she serves as an instrument in making Him better known and loved.

5

Who is Fit for the King?

All the beauty of the King's daughter is within
(Ps. 44: 14)

"WHO is fit for the King?" It was the King Himself who gave the answer on an occasion which provides one of the most appealing episodes in the whole life of Christ. The day had been an arduous one of traveling, preaching and ministering to the sick. At length, in weariness, Our Lord sat down to rest for a while. But not for long. To the irritation of the Apostles, who sensed their Master's fatigue, a group of children appeared and, with the instinctive assurance of the innocent, they approached Christ, climbed on His knees, scrambled to fit within the embrace of His arms or struggled to lay claim to some little portion of His divine person as their own. The impatient Apostles prepared to disperse these "intruders," but the loving Christ rebuked them, drew the children closer and proclaimed their priority to His attention. "Let the children come to Me, do not keep them back; the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you truthfully, the man who does not welcome the Kingdom of God like a child, will never enter into it" (Mark 10:14-15).

Here, then, is the first and all-important requisite for one who wishes to enter religious life—spiritual childhood. All sophistication must be banished. Simplicity, guilelessness, purity of intention and unselfish love must fill the heart of one who would be fit for the King.

Certain secondary considerations help a girl to determine whether or not she has a religious vocation. It must be remembered that God makes known His will in this matter, not by sending an angelic messenger to announce it, but rather through the ordinary attributes of the individual. These attributes are fourfold: health, intelligence, moral character and religious spirit.

For two reasons it is necessary that the aspirant to religious life possess good health: first, because the interrelationship between the physical and spiritual sides of our human nature is so intimate that one whose vitality is impaired by ill health would find it extremely difficult to practise with full vigor the spiritual exercises imposed. It requires normal physical strength to remain alert and attentive during periods of prayer which are much more frequent and more extended than those to which the young girl has been accustomed before entering the convent. Ill health, moreover, is a handicap, since it provides an opportunity which the devil seizes to induce one to yield to discouragement; it produces a state of mind which works havoc with one's spiritual progress.

Frequently, after a religious has become spiritually fortified, God sends the chastening cross of ill health in order further to purify and sanctify the soul, but it is not usually His way to deal thus with those who are young and inexperienced in the spiritual life. Secondly, good health is a prerequisite because the religious life itself is arduous. Whether the Sister is engaged in nursing the sick, educating the young, performing domestic duties, or undertaking the various phases of missionary activity, she needs a good physical constitution. The convent is not a conval-

escent home. Consequently, if a girl's health is impaired, she should take counsel with her physician as well as with the superiors of the order which she desires to enter before taking further steps in the matter.

If health of body is important, how much more essential is strength of mind! No less a master of the spiritual life than Saint Teresa of Avila stipulates that one who presents herself as a candidate for the religious life should possess intelligence. What does the saint mean by this quality which she considers of prime importance? Certainly she does not refer to an accumulation of secular knowledge. Bernadette of Lourdes was an ignorant little peasant girl, yet she scaled the heights of sanctity. The beloved Curé of Ars was so hopelessly dull as a student of Latin that his superiors hesitated before ordaining him a priest. Yet, today, he is the patron saint of all the secular clergy.

Who Is "Intelligent"?

Obviously Saint Teresa could not have meant by "intelligence" the ability to win scholastic honors. What she demanded was spiritual alertness, the ability to make a distinction between the valueless pleasures and goods of this world and basic realities. She demanded the ability to see the spiritual significance of Christ's teachings in the Gospels, and to grasp and appreciate the sanctifying possibilities of the virtues of humility, charity and obedience when practised for the love of God.

Would you test your intelligence? Recite the Apostles' Creed. Intelligence is a word derived from two Latin words, *intus* and *legere;* it means the abil-

ity "to read deep into the heart of something or somebody." Apply this to the words of the Creed. When you read deep into the heart of it, do you realize the implications of the statement that God is the Creator of all things? That the Son of God came to earth as Man, suffered, died, and rose from the dead to save *you?* That the Holy Spirit of God hovers ever near you, and that ultimately nothing matters but the four last things—death, judgment, heaven, hell? If you can read between the lines and pass this test, you are intellectually fit for the King.

Combined with physical and mental strength there should be a third, the most important: moral strength—by which we do not mean moral *perfection.* It often happens that one who is attracted to religious life hesitates because of a false humility. "I'm not good enough to be a Sister," she may remark. Let this be understood: no one enters the convent because she *is* so good, but that she may *become* good. Of course, the convent is not a reformatory; but it is a training school for the development of sanctity, and many saints have developed, in cooperation with the all-powerful grace of God, from rather unpromising material. Those who come to religious life bring with them their fallen human nature, with all its weakness and imperfection. But human faults which do not mar the moral integrity of one's character are not to be considered obstacles in the path of a religious vocation. In the final analysis, it may be concluded that a girl who is faithful to the Commandments of God and His Church possesses the moral requisities for religious life.

If the would-be candidate lives a normal, active, happy life and enjoys herself because she realizes that life is good and is to be lived to the fullness of her

capacities, she will, other things being equal, prove suitable material in the hands of those entrusted with her religious training. She should be a *normal* human being. A love of home and all its precious joys, an appreciation of the beauty of nature, an eager participation in the outdoor sports provided by our American way of life, a gay response of rhythmically sensitive feet to the dance tunes of a popular orchestra—traits such as these, far from deterring one who wishes to embrace religious life, give indication of a character which has great latent possibilities.

Strength, obviously, should be the weapon of the potential religious. A retreat master once remarked: "You can't blow open the gates of heaven with talcum powder." Christ Himself said: "The kingdom of heaven has opened to force; and the forceful are even now making it their prize" (Matt. 11:12). If one would exert a holy violence in the acquisition of sanctity, one must come to religious life equipped with vigor, physical and moral.

The Religious Spirit

In addition to these qualities, the aspirant must give evidence of possession of the religious spirit. The world has many erroneous ideas about this religious spirit. It cannot be judged by—and does not depend upon—its external manifestations. Lengthy and multiplied prayers and devotions do not necessarily indicate an appreciation of the things of the spirit. All too often sentimentality and a false concept of prayer generate a positive selfishness which stamps unduly long devotions with a love of self rather than love of Christ and His Mystical Body. On the other hand, many girls who are deeply religious are

at pains to conceal this quality from the eyes of a world which they suspect may not understand. They cherish the treasure of their intimacy with Christ as too sacred to be profaned by the comment of the crowd. Hence, the confessor alone is often the only competent judge of the religious spirit an aspirant possesses. Every prudent director will realize that prayer is the essence of religious life and that a candidate should have an appreciation for the practice of vocal and mental prayer if she desires to become a religious.

There is no such thing as a "type" of girl who forsakes the world for Christ's sake. Convent walls are large enough to embrace all types; the activities of the life, moreover, are sufficiently diversified to provide satisfaction for all temperaments. Grace builds on nature. The grace of God is sufficient to make a saint out of any human creature, granted that the creature *wills* to become a saint. Personality traits such as affability, courtesy, poise, generosity and gentility are, assuredly, assets which contribute to the development of the individual. On the other hand, one who is not endowed by nature with these gifts may acquire them by grace and effort, when, as a result of meditation, she recognizes these qualities as virtues possessed by Christ.

There is, however, one trait of character which is practically indispensable if one would be happy in religious life. That is a sense of humor. Analyzed to its basic principle, a sense of humor is the outgrowth of humility. It is the mind's recognition of truth—its power to discern what is consistent with the rights of God and man. The more alert your mind is to recognize the incongruity of any situation, the greater is your sense of humor.

Actually, were it not for the overwhelming mercy of God, the attempt of fallen man to love a God of infinite majesty would be utterly incongruous. Even with the powerful assistance which man receives from God, his efforts to rise to heights of sanctity are often as ludicrous as the early efforts of a baby to rise to its feet. One finds, even in religious life, that human weakness often frustrates one's best efforts at self-conquest. It is here that a sense of humor rushes to the rescue and saves one from going down to an ignominious defeat in discouragement. Humility says: "Of myself I can do nothing. In fact, I'm quite a funny spectacle. With the help of God, I can do anything. I will try again."

Let these questions, then, be well considered by one who feels a call to religious perfection: Have I a sense of humor? How seriously do I take myself and my troubles? Can I see the humorous side of a situation even when I am unwittingly the cause of the humor? Whoever can give a satisfactory answer to these questions, possesses one of the surest qualities which will conduce to peace of heart in religious life.

6

Hurdles

Who will separate us from the love of Christ?
(Rom. 8:35)

AMONG the numerous parables which Our Lord recounted with great effectiveness, there is one with particular pertinence for this question of a religious vocation. It is the parable of the marriage feast. The host had made preparations for a delightful banquet. He had issued invitations to a carefully selected group. Finally the hour of the feast arrived, and formal announcement was made for the invited guests to assemble. But, to the amazement and chagrin of the host, the guests had sent excuses—specious excuses, which revealed their callous selfishness, their lack of consideration for their generous host and their failure to appreciate the sumptuous feast they were so heedlessly disregarding. At first, the host received the excuses with disappointment. Eventually, however, his indignation was aroused, and he sent his servants to summon other guests to fill the banquet table—guests who would show their appreciation of his liberality by partaking gratefully of the fare so bountifully provided. "I tell you," says the master of the house at the end of the parable, "none of those who were first invited shall taste of my supper" (Luke 14:24).

Were we to ask Our Lord, as His disciples sometimes did, to make application of this parable, He might explain it as follows:

The marriage feast is a religious vocation to which

Christ the King invites a few carefully chosen souls. From all eternity He prepares special blessings which these souls will enjoy if they embrace religious life. At a certain moment in their lives, the Holy Ghost summons them, saying that now all is ready for them. Then, all at once, the Lord hears them making excuses. "I have bought a farm," the first says, "and I must needs go and look over it" (Luke 14:18).

The World's Goods

A farm? Wordly possessions? Can wealth and the things wealth can buy be weighed in the scales against an invitation to enjoy most intimate companionship with the King of Kings? Surely the devil achieves one of his greatest triumphs when he succeeds in so distorting one's sense of values that worldy goods have a greater appeal than the blessings which await one in a life consecrated to the service of God. "Money, property, independence—these," the devil whispers, "you must forfeit if you dedicate yourself to Christ under vows of poverty, chastity and obedience." "With what difficulty," replies Our Lord, "will those who have riches enter God's kingdom! It is easier for a camel to pass through a needle's eye, than for a man to enter the kingdom of God when he is rich" (Mark 10:23-26). Certainly, one should consider this warning carefully before absenting one's self from the marriage feast because of cares connected with worldly goods.

A second guest who has been invited offers this excuse: "I have bought five pair of oxen, and I am on my way to make trial of them (Luke 14:19). Evidently, he is a workingman. His occupation is really a preoccupation. Work and all its attendant

distractions so completely absorb his attention that he has no time for the king and his interests. Like Martha, who was "distracted by waiting on many needs," he will hear too late Our Lord's reproach: "How many cares and troubles thou hast! But only one thing is necessary; and Mary has chosen for herself the best part of all, that which shall never be taken away from her" (Luke 10:40-42). Unquestionably, work is a necessary element in man's life. It is both a punishment and a blessing. But it must be kept in its proper place, and regarded as a means to an end—not as the end itself! By work one earns money to buy "daily bread"; the bread provides strength for life; life is to be spent in the service of God that we may glorify His Name and attain the purpose of our creation—union with Him forever in heaven.

The World's Work

Perhaps you are inclined to think that the devil cannot possibly find a way to use work as a barrier in the path of one who is considering a religious vocation. If you think this, you are certainly underestimating his cleverness!

There has probably been no period in history when work has loomed so large as an obstacle, particularly in the life of young women. Attractive careers in the field of journalism, radio, science, art and industry lure the young with their rosy-hued promises of independence, adventure, worldly pleasures and—last, but by no means least—the weekly paycheck. There are, of course, many cases in which circumstances at home seem to make this paycheck a necessity. There is no question of such cases here.

But in most families, when a religious vocation is at stake, fathers and mothers are willing to make heroic sacrifices and place entire trust in God's Providence rather than risk the loss of the vocation. All too often it is the individual concerned who excuses herself from the banquet of the King, saying her family needs her, when, in reality, she finds her work so engrossing, and the pleasure it affords so attractive, that she cannot make the sacrifice and renunciation demanded by religious life.

It must be realized, of course, that the King has apportioned certain work to be done by souls consecrated to Him in what is called the lay apostolate. Like the leaven mentioned in the Gospels, these chosen ones assume an almost unnoticed place in the midst of a world which ignores Christ and His doctrines. Little by little, the example of their daily lives attracts attention, wins respect and confers upon them responsibilities which afford opportunity for conquests for the King. Just as effectively as their sisters in the convent, they show in their lives love-in-action. Quite recently our beloved Holy Father, Pius XII, made an eloquent plea that Catholic laywomen respond to this special vocation that is theirs in the world today. The timely organization, too, of the "Christophers" points the way for those whom the King has chosen to bear His message into the whirling, seething flood of public life. Let there be no misunderstanding: all are not called to the religious life, just as all are not called to the married state. Some are positively called by the King to be lay apostles. Is it not fitting here to recall that it was one of these latter, a woman of highest courage and heroic sanctity, Martha de Noaillat, who promoted the establishment of the Feast of Christ the King?

Still a third guest is mentioned in the parable. The excuse which he offers is: "I have married a wife, and so I am unable to come" (Luke 14:20). Family attachments stand in his way. We are not told why his wife would not let him go to the banquet. If she were sick and needed him, does it not seem likely that he would have mentioned this as his excuse? Perhaps she was just an unreasonable, selfish individual who had no logical pretext for preventing her husband's attendance at the feast. Perhaps, in pure selfishness, she wanted to keep him at home, although she knew he would be far happier at the great banquet. Perhaps she was planning an entertainment herself, and demanded that her husband help her. There are any number of possible family circumstances which can be imagined. The point in the parable is that the importance of the excuse is out of proportion to the invitation which was refused.

The World's Way

The application is not difficult. A major obstacle placed in the way of those who wish to enter the convent is family—and especially parental—objection. Strangely enough, a young man who aspires to the priesthood often does not meet with such strenuous opposition as does the young woman who desires to become the Bride of Christ. Possibly this is to be explained by the lack of understanding on the part of many Catholics of the meaning and conduct of religious life. In a large number of cases, however, the arguments offered to deter a young girl from entering religious life have their roots in selfishness. Parents are selfish when they insist on drawing up plans for their children's lives, and then force them

to conform. All too often parents seem to forget that their children have been entrusted to them by God and that His, not theirs, is the first claim on their love, their service, their lives.

This selfishness, deep-rooted in human nature, can interfere with God's plans and deprive a family of the inestimable graces which God confers on a home which has nurtured a vocation.

How many religious who have found unspeakable happiness within convent walls look back to the struggle they had in order to respond to God's invitation! Christ said, "Follow Me!" A mother's or a father's voice demanded, "You are being selfish. Stay with *me*!" Only with the help of a generous gift of fortitude from the Holy Ghost can one turn a deaf ear to such demands. Many have done so and found peace and happiness. In practically every case, the family attitude was completely reversed as soon as it became evident that selfishness could not prevail against the ardor of a young soul's love for God.

No one denies that the sacrifice which Christ exacts of mothers and fathers is greater, even, than that which is required of the one entering religious life. If one parent is not of the Catholic faith, the situation is even more difficult. But the Crusaders' cry, "God wills it!" must be on the lips of all who would follow a crucified King. "In His Will is our peace."

Surely, one who feels that she is among those the King has invited to the great banquet will not present Him any excuse such as the invited guests in the parable sent. Rather will she want to send the King her gracious acceptance, in phrases which might well echo those so charmingly expressed in this little poem by Sister M. Maura, S.S.N.D.:

*Mary Eileen Writes a Love Letter**

For my veil
I think I would have chosen marquisette
but since You chose
this plain black net,
so be it.

I favor eyelet piqué or organdy
for summer wear,
velvet or bright flowers
for my hair;

I have never been immune
to fashion change,
never found a mode too new,
nor too strange.

But You, my Lord,
I find You urge
coifs more startling than I dared,
linen stuff and serge;
lengths and widths
in what largesse,
never a gown
but a bridal dress.
So be it.

To end the other letters I have written
I have crossed kisses with this pen;
for You, my Love, to Whom I come this very day,
I only write, Amen. Amen.

---

*From the *Sentinel of the Blessed Sacrament,* March, 1946. By permission of the Sentinel Press, New York, N. Y.

7

The Path to the King

Never cease praying . . . scrutinize all carefully, retaining only what is good, and rejecting all that has a look of evil about it (I Thess. 5: 17-22)

PERHAPS, at times, you have felt within you an indefinable spirit of dissatisfaction with your present manner of life and a vague yearning for something that would satisfy. A little voice seemed to whisper to your heart: "Why not consecrate your life to Christ? He longs for your love and will lavish His Love upon you in return. He needs generous souls who will serve Him courageously and unselfishly and help Him save men from the snares of His enemy, the devil."

Did you recognize this voice? It was the Holy Spirit. He has His abode within everyone who is in the state of grace and, if the acoustics of your heart are good, you can hear His slightest whisper. You may, however, be hesitant; you fear that you only imagined the voice. You want the message repeated. If only the whisper had been a little louder! Of course, you would not hesitate to respond to *God's* invitation, but you simply want to be sure that the invitation did come from God.

Have no fears. The message will be repeated—probably many times. Always it will be given in the same gentle manner, but the persistence of it will convince you of its reality. You will be amazed at the times and circumstancees under which the message will be flashed into your heart, and from your

heart to your mind. It may come as you sit in the midst of an excited, cheering crowd at a football game. You may hear it as you sway to the strains of orchestra music on a crowded dance floor. As you struggle with school problems or strive to carry out orders given by your employer, or assist at home in the countless little ways in which only a girl can assist, the voice will come, urging, but never demanding—pleading, but leaving it within your power to refuse.

Let us imagine that you have heeded the persistent little voice. Deep within your heart a resolution has formed which you have never put into words but, if you did, the words would be, "Some day I am going to be a Sister!" It may be soon or it may be a long time before you will be able to carry out that resolution. Meanwhile, like a precious seedling, it must be nurtured and guarded against the blighting forces of the world about you.

Saint Paul, in the passage quoted at the beginning of this chapter, has outlined a program which will ensure the successful development of this seed of a religious vocation. First he advises, "Never cease praying!" "What!" you exclaim in amazement. "Is that to be taken *literally*?" Absolutely. It is a very simple matter. All one has to do is to be in the state of grace, and each morning offer the thoughts, words and actions of the day to God in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. By this simple act of consecration, all actions of the day become a form of prayer. It is not necessary to be on your knees, nor is it necessary to speak any words at all in order to pray. You may take a drink of water, wash the dishes or play the piano—and make of every such simple action a prayer.

Of course, formal prayer should have an important place in the life of one who cherishes in her heart the hope of becoming one day the spouse of Christ. The perfect prayer is the Mass. Here one comes into the closest possible contact with God Himself through Holy Communion. No one can estimate the graces lavished upon the soul during this precious, early-morning visit. In the warmth of Christ's love the soul expands and develops, and all mists of indecision vanish before the light of His Holy Spirit. Frequent, even daily, Mass and Holy Communion, though not obligatory, are unquestionably the greatest aid in preparing for the day of one's espousal to the King.

Keeping in Touch with God

Another very effective form of prayer is the use of aspirations or ejaculations. By becoming familiar with many of the brief invocations of Christ, Our Lady, or the saints which the Church has so highly indulgenced, one can keep in frequent and easy contact with God throughout the day. This is the wireless system that God has established, whereby men can send Him loving little messages of praise and thanksgiving, urgent pleas for help and strength, and earnest cries for mercy and pardon.

Foremost among these aspirations should be a short invocation of the Holy Ghost. You have probably heard the story about the time Saint Paul visited the people of Ephesus and, meeting some disciples there, asked them, "Was the Holy Spirit given to you, when you learned to believe?" "Why," they said, "nobody even mentioned to us the existence of a Holy Spirit!" (Acts 19:2). That was nearly nineteen hundred years ago. How aware are *you,* today, of the existence of

the Holy Spirit? How often do you pray to Him? Do you honor His presence, which abides constantly within your heart?

Who is this Holy Spirit? He is God, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. He is the Spirit of Love who visited our Blessed Mother on the day of the Annunciation and caused Christ to take His abode within her. He is the Spirit of Holiness who sheds grace upon souls and produces sanctity in them. He is the truth-giving Spirit who makes all things plain and directs souls in the way of truth.

The wonderful effects which He produces may best be learned by considering the words in which the Church addresses the Holy Spirit in her famous hymn, *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*. She calls upon Him to console and enlighten hearts, to bestow upon them heavenly gifts, to offer rest and refreshment to the weary, to cleanse and heal the injured, to warm hearts that are tepid, to direct wayward steps, to confer blessings and rewards for virtue, to bestow peace and to send upon the faithful His sevenfold gifts.

Every impulse toward good is prompted by the Holy Ghost. He is the source of all the strength necessary for the practice of virtue. It is clear, therefore, that frequent prayers to the Divine Spirit will be of inestimable help in ascertaining and following God's will. Divine inspiration will be the most dependable guide in carrying out the second part of Saint Paul's advice: "Scrutinize all carefully, retaining only what is good, and rejecting all that has a look of evil about it." By all means, the future Bride of Christ should develop and cherish a tender and constant devotion to the Holy Spirit that she may learn "to know Christ more intimately, love Him more ardently and follow Him more closely."

Two of the most helpful guides on the path to the King are the right confessor and good reading. A prudent spiritual director will point out ways in which virtue is to be practised, how self is to be conquered, and sin stamped out. He will suggest spiritual books which will help to clarify ideas about religious life and instil an appreciation of Christlike charity, heroic courage and unselfish devotion to the King. The inspiration thus derived tends to focus the attention on spiritual values; and Christ, Our Lady and the saints become better known and loved.

The Mother of the King

It is Our Lady, particularly, whom the future religious should study and imitate. She is our exalted model, reigning as Queen of Angels and Saints with Christ the King. Lady of Good Counsel, Mediatrix of all Grace, Queen of Virgins, Mother of God and *our* Mother—with these and other glorious titles her children invoke her. Never has she been known to fail those who called upon her. Certainly, one who is thinking of consecrating her life to Christ can confidently ask His Mother for help in preparing for such a holy vocation.

Mary is the ideal of every religious. It is through her that Christ is most easily reached. We salute her as "Daughter of God the Father, Mother of God the Son, Spouse of the Holy Ghost, Temple of the Blessed Trinity." Surely, one who enjoys such intimate relationships with the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity can best teach us how to proceed along the path to the King. Our Lady's humility lured Christ to leave the glory of heaven in order to become incarnate within her chaste womb. Her charity

brought sanctifying grace to John the Baptist even before his birth. Her patience and selflessness led her to the heights of Calvary, where Christ, with His dying breath, bequeathed her to us as our Mother. Her zeal and devotion as she prayed with the assembled Apostles after Christ's Ascension hastened the coming of the Paraclete. Yes, Mary is the perfect model for those who seek the way to the Heart of her Son.

Finally, Mary has given us a brief direction to follow if we would attain sanctity. It is so simple that even a child can understand it. She spoke the words first on the occasion when Christ changed water into wine at the marriage feast of Cana. After mentioning the failing supply of wine to her Son, she turned to the waiters and said: "Do whatever He tells you (John 2:5). They did. The miracle resulted.

Our Blessed Mother will arrange for similar miracles of grace in our soul life, provided we heed her advice: "Do whatever He tells you." Prayer to her will obtain God's grace, the Light of the Holy Spirit. Grace will bring with it knowledge of God's will, wisdom to understand His point of view, and fortitude to walk on the path to the King. And our Lady will be found walking there, too.

8

Obligations to the King

With Christ I hang upon the Cross (Gal. 2: 19)

HAVE you ever imagined how interesting it would be to have the power to read people's thoughts? Let us suppose that we have that wonderful power: the thoughts we shall read are those in the heart of a young religious who has just pronounced her vows. She is kneeling in the chapel before her Eucharistic King. In spite of all who are around her, it seems that He and she are alone in the world. She has, at long last, reached the most thrilling moment in a drama of love. The King has taken His little handmaid to be His own—forever. Is it any wonder that her heart is nearly bursting with joy? Memories, aspirations, loving expressions of gratitude, zeal and renunciation well up from within and are poured forth in the intimacy of love to Christ:

"Dear Jesus, at last I am wholly Yours. I surrender myself entirely and forever into Your Hands. Do with me what You will. Use me as an instrument in spreading Your Kingdom. You know the fire of love which burns within this poor heart of mine. Keep that fire alive with the constant flame of charity—Your Holy Spirit. Grant that all who come into contact with me may be touched by the power of that fire, and let some spark from my love enkindle them to greater devotion to You.

"How long I have been preparing for this day! With what eagerness I have looked forward to the moment which would make me forever the con-

secrated spouse of the King of Kings! How I have longed to pronounce the vows which would give me the right to say, with Saint Paul, 'With Christ, I hang upon the Cross!'

"I look at my crucifix, which proclaims to all the world that I have pledged myself to a life of union with my crucified Saviour. Those who fastened Christ to His Cross intended it to be a sign of dishonor. But the wood which bore upon it the Body of God became for all times an emblem of hope, a symbol of love, a badge of honor. It is my greatest honor—the sign that I am one with the Crucified.

The Meaning of the Cross

"What a precious treasure my crucifix is! What a constant reminder of my privileges and responsibilities! I look at the two beams, crossed, and there comes to mind the beautiful significance which Monsignor Sheen has attached to them. One represents the will of God, the other my will. When I place my will in opposition to that of Christ, I have formed the cross. But if I place my will alongside of His, no longer is there any cross, but a yoke which is sweet and light.

"The longer I gaze upon the crucifix, the more my wonder grows. How incomprehensible is the love of a God who went to such extremes to prove His love for me! Those outflung arms—love's gesture! I remember once seeing a mother playing with her little daughter. 'How much do you love Mother?' she asked, and baby arms stretched way, way out as she assured her mother, 'So-o-o much!' Dear Christ, see, I fling my arms out, too, because I want to show You that every bit of love I have I give You. And as I

thus extend my arms, I see a shadow cast upon the wall. It is a cross. But what a difference between Christ crucified and me! His hands and feet were nailed into position, and who can conceive the suffering caused the sensitive body of Christ by such inhuman cruelty? But I have just pronounced my vows, and those three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience will constitute for me the three nails whereby, with Christ, I am nailed to the cross!

"It is the nail of poverty which binds my right hand, the hand with which I give and receive. No longer will that hand be free to act as it pleases. Its freedom from now on will be restricted by the obligations which the vow of poverty imposes. Nothing is mine to give away. I have pledged my word that I shall identify myself with the Son of a Galilean carpenter who was so poor in His lifetime that He did not even have a place to lay His head at night. At His birth He had to seek hospitality from the lowly cattle whose stalls and straw furnished His first cradle. At His death a stranger provided Him with a place of burial.

"My vow of poverty will never impose upon me hardships comparable to His, but I must strive to become so poor in heart and spirit that I desire none of the creature comforts this world has to offer. I must receive gratefully the provision my community makes for my bodily needs and if, sometimes, the clothing I am given is not just what I would select for myself; if the food is less palatable than I would wish; if I must live in a convent all too close to the railroad tracks; if the mattress on my bed is not exactly a 'Beauty-Rest'—I will not complain, but rejoice to share in some small measure the privations of my Master.

"I know there will be sharp twinges of pain caused by this nail of poverty; but only one who has learned the lessons of detachment and sacrifice can know the interior peace which comes to those who try to follow in the footsteps of Christ in His poverty. He Himself declared to His followers, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit; the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs' (Matt. 5: 3), and Saint Paul told the Corinthians that 'Christ impoverished Himself for your sakes, when He was so rich, so that you might become rich through His poverty' (II Cor. 8: 9). Why, then, should I hesitate to embrace poverty in the fullest sense of the word when Christ the King has promised in exchange a share in His Kingdom?

The Offering of Love

"My left hand, too, is nailed with Christ to the cross. It is the hand nearest my heart—nearest the seat of my affections. By my vow of chastity I have consecrated all my affections to Christ. All the love of my heart I lay at His feet. It is a meager offering at best, but it is all I have. What security I feel when I realize that I am espoused to Christ, the Son of God! It is true that I have foregone the happiness of motherhood, but in compensation for this God has ordained that I may be a mother to the Mystical Body of Christ. All the loving services which Our Lady rendered to her Divine Son I may perform for Him in the persons of the sick and poor I meet in my work, the children I teach, the orphans I care for.

"Of course, in order to take and keep this vow, I realize how much I need the Holy Spirit's gift of fortitude. I must ever keep in mind the words of Saint Paul: 'Those who belong to Christ have cruci-

fied nature, with all its passions, all its impulses' (Gal. 5: 25). Our inner nature never dies a painless death. Numberless occasions will arise when I shall be forcibly reminded of this nail. But always I have the assurance that Christ, my Spouse, is conscious of the struggle, is near to assist me, and rejoices in my victory. It is by this vow that I may become like the angels in purity. Like Saint John, the virgin disciple, I may hope to draw near, in closest intimacy, to Christ, and learn the secrets of His Sacred Heart.

The Will to Serve

"My third vow—obedience—fastens my feet to the cross. No longer am I free to go and come as I choose. All my traveling, all my work, all my recreation, yes, even in large measure my prayers, must be undertaken in obedience to my superior or to the Rule of my community. It is just like being in the army! Christ, the Commander-in-Chief, has arranged every detail of the order of the day. From the moment I came to religious life, I have been learning the meaning of obedience. Sometimes, at first, it was hard, especially when I was not given the reason for doing something which seemed unnecessary or inopportune. But gradually I came to realize that the religious who practises obedience best is the one whoes not question the motives or judgment of her superior, but submits her whole will to the will of another. It is in this way that one becomes conformed to the image of Christ, who was obedient unto death. Saint Paul says of Him: 'Son of God though He was, He learned obedience in the school of suffering, and now, His full achievement reached, He wins eternal salvation for all those who render obedience to Him'

(Heb. 5: 8, 9). I know well that you cannot separate the two things—obedience and suffering. The constant pressure of the nail of obedience will curb my impulses, restrain my desires and bend my will.

"It is this will of mine—so inclined to evil, so inconsistent, so wayward—that I offer You, dear Christ, today. You are my King. I shall be, like Mary, Your handmaid. No matter what happens, my response will be an echo of her words: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done unto me according to Thy word' (Luke 1: 38). Little by little my heart, my soul, my whole being will take on a likeness to You. Certainly, obedience and suffering are not too high a price to pay for sanctity.

"As I gaze upon the crucifix which I have just received as the badge of my profession, I recall the immortal advice given by a certain saintly bishop in France as he presented the Profession Cross to the first Sisters of a newly founded religious community nearly three centuries ago:

> Wear it openly, bear it bravely, just as Christ did, up anguished heights. Carry it down the ways of pain into homes of fever, into the warrens of the poor; bear it off to far lands. Be it your oriflamme to light you to victory. When in death you resign it, let other hands and hearts like to yours in consecration take up the burden, preserving it ever in their and your society's keeping during the onrolling centuries.

"How well these words sum up the ideal which is in my heart today! Warm with the thrill of Your love for me, proud with the realization that I am Yours forever, burning with an eagerness to carry the message of Your love to all who do not know You,

I step forth into a new world and am launched upon my glorious adventure. A phrase from the beautiful liturgy of the Mass for the Feast of Christ the King comes to my mind: '*Instaurare omnia in Christo*'—'to restore all things in Christ.' Yes, that will be my motto. Whatever be the hardships which come my way, I will accept them all and unite them to Your sufferings, my King, and, thus united, they will help to bring about the submission of sin-hardened hearts to Your gentle reign."

9

The King's Commission

While time lasts, thy name shall never be forgotten
(Psalm 44:18)

"DRAW close to Me, Barbara, Joan, Patricia, Rosemary, Anne—draw close, while I share with you My plans for winning back the Kingdom which sin has taken from Me. Today you have determined to enlist for 'officers' training' in My service. That decision has brought a flood of joy to My Sacred Heart. I need valiant, generous hearts like yours to form a courageous *corps d'élite.* Hostile forces are massed against us, and those in the front ranks of My army must be ready for danger, privations, hardships and battle scars. 'Sacrifice' must be our watchword, and all must be ready to give evidence of that reckless, uncalculating spirit which Paul showed when he cried out: 'Death is a prize to be won!' (Phil. 1:21).

"Child of Love, for long ages I have been looking down the years to this day when you would pledge yourself to My service. With special graces I have provided for this moment. And now, as I look into your heart and behold there an eager, burning desire to give yourself entirely and unreservedly to Me, I see that

Thine is more than mortal beauty, thy lips overflow with gracious utterance; the blessings God has granted thee can never fail.[1]

[1]This quotation and those which follow are taken from Monsignor Ronald Knox' translation of Psalm 44.

"Remember, child, this guarantee: I will always be near to observe your efforts, to bless your undertakings, to assist you in difficulties, and to reward you for the sufferings you have endured in My service. No matter how severe your trials may be, have confidence in the never-failing aid from on high—the gifts which the Holy Spirit will pour upon you to sustain you, encourage you, and sanctify you in your warfare for the cause of the King.

Gird on thy sword at thy side, great warrior, gird thyself with all thy majesty and all thy beauty; ride on triumphant, in the name of faithfulness and justice.

"Like another Joan of Arc, ride on as a triumphant warrior, fearless and undismayed in the face of the enemies' assaults. Confident in the righteousness of the cause you are upholding, adorned with the majesty which is yours as spouse of the King and with the beauty which is the special gift of the Spirit of Love, ride forward, unfurling the banner of the King, straight against the ranks of the enemy.

Dread counsel thy own might shall give thee; so sharp are thy arrows, subduing nations to thy will, daunting the hearts of the king's enemies. . . .

"Do you realize, dear child, what power will be yours? Two types of arrows are supplied to you: prayer, whereby you can pierce the ramparts of heaven and procure for men all over the world graces which will render them subjects of the King; and good works, whereby the hearts and minds of men can be softened and turned from their service of My enemy to the service of their true Lord and Master. Whether you kneel as sentinel before the Blessed Sacrament, or bear the name and banner of the King

to distant lands; whether you labor to train new recruits for the Kingdom, or minister to the sick and wounded of the Kingdom, you may send forth your arrows and spread consternation among the enemy while you win victory after victory for Christ the King.

Thou hast been a friend to right, an enemy to wrong, and God, thy own God, has given thee an unction to bring thee pride beyond any of thy fellows . . .

"This is the real test of your loyalty to Me—your love of all that is right and your hatred of all that is wrong. There will be occasions when it will be extremely difficult to hold to your position beneath the standard of the King—occasions which will demand utter disregard of the opinions of men and uncompromising fidelity to principle. For My Kingdom is not of this world; yet its subjects must be drawn from this world. But the effort will merit a citation of distinction and will raise you to a position of preeminence among your companions. Already you have shown enthusiastic allegiance to My ideals, a zealous eagerness for the advancement of My Kingdom, and a fearless ardor in combating My enemies. I can see that you possess the spirit that produced a Thomas More, an Isaac Jogues, a Catherine of Siena, an Ignatius of Loyola, a Rose of Lima. It is the spirit that has fired the saints—the spirit of loyalty that is indispensable in My close followers. I am depending on you, Barbara, Joan, Patricia, Rosemary, Anne—I am depending on you to distinguish yourselves in the special commission I am entrusting to you. There are certain features of this commission which no one but you can accomplish according to My plans. Nothing that is beyond your strength will be asked of you,

but you will need an undaunted and generous heart. Are you ready?

Daughters of kings come out to meet thee; at thy right hand stands the queen, in Ophir gold arrayed.

"No honor shall be too great for you; and far above all the honor which shall be paid you by men will be the honor of having Mary, My own Mother, the Queen of heaven and earth, standing ever at your side to guide you, counsel you, protect you and love you. As her radiance, beauty and loveliness shine forth, they will fall upon you and will be reflected in your eyes, your face, your entire being. The glory of the Queen will overshadow you, the princess, and you will be beautiful with the beauty of My own Mother.

(*Listen, my daughter, and consider my words attentively; thou art to forget, henceforward, thy own nation, and the house of thy fathers; thy beauty now is all for the king's delight; he is thy Lord, and worship belongs to Him.*) . . .

"Ah, child! this is the condition you must heed if you would fight in the foremost ranks against My foes. So long as you consider yourself a part of your father's house, a member of one particular nation, your interests are too circumscribed, your horizons are too narrow. The conquest of the whole world is now to be your goal. As for the affection with which you have been surrounded at home, have no fear and no misunderstanding. I will not destroy the love you have for your dear ones. Rather, I will sublimate it, transform it, suffuse it with new warmth and tenderness which have their center in Me instead of in yourself. But since you are now to become the Spouse of the King, you must, as the poet says:

Give beauty back, beauty, beauty, beauty, back to God, beauty's self and beauty's giver.

You will not regret your gift.

She comes, the princess, all fair to see, her robe of golden cloth, a robe of rich embroidery, to meet the King. The maidens of her court follow her into thy presence, all rejoicing, all triumph, as they enter the king's palace!

"You see, My child, you will be a princess, coming in all beauty to meet the King! Your golden robe will be of your own making, fashioned of the precious golden threads of innumerable prayers you have offered during days and months and years spent in My service. And upon the robe will be embroidered intricate and beautiful designs, representing the activities to which your love and zeal have prompted you to give your entire life and strength. Look! There is that group of orphans you instructed for their First Holy Communion; the lonely old couple you visited each week for several years. And who are those young men standing before the altar? None other than your former students, whom you encouraged and inspired by word and example to consecrate their lives to the King! No wonder that, as you come, you are not alone but are bringing many others with you, to enter the King's palace, where unending joy has been prepared for those who follow the King—joy such as this earth could never offer you—joy which 'no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no human heart conceived' (I Cor. 2:9).

Thou shalt have sons worthy of thy own fathers, and divide a world between them for their domains. While time lasts, thy name shall never be forgotten; age after age, nations will do thee honor.

"You cannot instruct Me, child, in the ways of the human heart, for I *had* a human heart. I know of its dreams, its longings, its most secret aspirations. I realize perfectly the sacrifice that is entailed by the renunciation of your right to a home and children of your own. Yet, note the promise: 'Thou shalt have sons worthy of thy own fathers.' These will be sons whom you may rightly claim as your own, begotten of your love for the Holy Spirit, brought to the Light of the Kingdom through your sufferings, formed for their supernatural destiny at the cost of great personal sacrifice on your part. To each of them you may give the assurance of a share in the mighty Kingdom where the King, your Spouse, rules in wisdom and love. And child, the reward I offer you is unending. 'While time lasts, thy name shall never be forgotten; age after age, nations will do thee honor.' You ask Me the price? No more than this—a dauntless spirit, a heart that is brave, for *only the brave are fit for the King!*

A BOOK FOR RETREATANTS

KNOW YOUR KING

By ROBERT F. GREWEN, S.J.

REFLECTIONS ON THE LIFE OF THE SAVIOUR

A volume of meditative reading written especially for lay and religious retreatants and retreat masters. Follows the traditional order of the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises. The 87 brief, pointed discourses deal in one part with God's plan for man, and in the other with the noble figure of the Saviour as Ideal and Leader.

Father Grewen, an experienced retreat master, is director of Christ the King Retreat House in Syracuse. He has based *Know Your King* on his discourses to retreatants during many years.

$2.00

at your Booksellers or

THE AMERICA PRESS, 70 E. 45th St., N. Y. C. 17

TWO *Cardinal Newman* PRAYER BOOKS

COMPILED BY DANIEL M. O'CONNELL, S.J.

HEART TO HEART

The First Cardinal Newman Prayer Book

More than two hundred selected prayers, sacred poems and devotional passages especially from his Meditations and Devotions. $2.00

"Cardinal Newman at his best."—*Archbishop Goodier*

KINDLY LIGHT

A Second Cardinal Newman Prayer Book

Well over three hundred beautiful selections of prayers and spiritual reflections, mainly from the Cardinal's Plain and Parochial Sermons, the flower of his prose. $2.00

"Reading this selection from Newman's writings is as listening to music that flows from an unseen shrine. Tender, simple, and compelling are the strains in which language is attuned to themes that transcend words." —*The New York Times*

AMERICA PRESS

70 E. 45th ST.,NEW YORK 17, N. Y.